

Public Funding Observatory

**EUA**

**Public Funding Observatory**  
Methodological note

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## 1. Introduction

The EUA Public Funding Observatory (PFO) is an annual review of university public funding trends across Europe. The report is published by the European University Association (EUA) in cooperation with its collective members, national rectors' conferences. EUA is grateful to its collective members for their long-standing cooperation and continuous effort to report on national public funding for universities at the European level.

The first PFO report was issued in 2008 with the aim to monitor the impact of the financial crisis on higher education institutions in different countries across Europe. Since then, EUA has been collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data on public funding for European higher education institutions and the related policy developments to showcase the immediate trends and the long-term evolution of the European university funding landscape.

This methodological note accompanies [the 2017 Public Funding Observatory report](#). It provides a detailed overview of data sources and the methodology behind the PFO analysis. It also contains additional graphs to drill into the details of various short-term and long-term trends highlighted in the report.

Most recent PFO data is also featured in [the interactive online tool](#). Specific funding, student and staff data for each system covered by the PFO is presented in a series of country sheets.



## 2. Data collection

### 2.1. Types of data collected

EUA collected the following quantitative and qualitative data for the 2017 Public Funding Observatory:

- Public funding data
- Annual student data
- Annual staff data
- Macroeconomic data

#### 2.1.1. Public funding data

##### Annual volume of national public funding

This type of quantitative data includes total officially announced or estimated public funding allocated in a given year for one of the following groups of institutions:

*Table 1 Types of funded institutions featured in the 2017 Public Funding Observatory*

Type of publicly funded institutions covered
All types of public institutions included in the national higher education system (universities, universities of applied sciences, specialised higher education colleges, etc.)
All public universities (excluding other types of higher education institutions)
All higher education institutions (both public and private) annually receiving institutional funding from public sources
All public and private universities annually receiving institutional funding from public sources

Total funding is provided by all public authorities with a significant funding role for higher education (at federal, regional, and local levels) or by national public funding authorities only.

Total public funding data may or may not include allocations from EU structural funds. In the former case, such allocations are shown separately in the country sheets, provided the related data is available.

Total funding data includes institutional funding and does not include competitive funding distributed on the basis of dedicated programmes and calls.

Total funding data includes public spendings on all fronts (e.g. teaching, research, and infrastructure) of activities pursued by higher education institutions.

The original public funding data is collected in absolute terms and in local currency. Currency conversion and adjustment to inflation are made subsequently for all national datasets (see below).

### Changes in the volume of annual public funding by funding area

Qualitative data on annual changes in public funding is collected for the following areas of university funding:

*Table 2 Changes in public funding by area*

Area of funding	Estimated degree of changes
Research	The level of funding in 2017 increased
Teaching	The level of funding in 2017 decreased
Staff	The level of funding in 2017 remained unchanged
Infrastructures and investments	

### Impact of funding changes on various areas of university's activities

Qualitative data on estimated impact of changes in public funding is collected for the following areas of university's activities:

*Table 3 Impact of public funding changes by area*

Area of activities	Estimated degree of impact
Research	Significant positive impact
Teaching	Moderate positive impact
Academic offer / student services	No impact
Tuition fee policies	Moderate negative impact
Staffing policies	Significant negative impact
Infrastructures and investments	
Other	

### Current debate in the context of funding changes

This qualitative data is collected on the basis of an open question.

#### 2.1.2. Annual student data

This quantitative data includes the number of students (in full time equivalents or headcount) enrolled in a given year one of the following types of institutions:

*Table 4 Institutions enrolling students*

Type of publicly funded institutions covered
All types of public institutions included in the national higher education system (universities, universities of applied sciences, specialised higher education colleges, etc.)
All public universities (excluding other types of higher education institutions)
All higher education institutions (both public and private) annually receiving institutional funding from public sources
All public and private universities annually receiving institutional funding from public sources

The EUA Public Funding Observatory has been collecting student data since 2013. The evolving student body is one of the key factors that underpin the development of national university landscapes and therefore represent an important element in the analysis of university funding trends.

### 2.1.3. Annual staff data

This quantitative data includes the number of total staff (in full time equivalents) employed by a public institution. Data is collected for two categories of staff: academic and non-academic. The exact composition of two categories is defined by each respondent. Doctoral candidates may or may not be included in academic staff. Data may be available for both categories, academic staff only, or total staff only (not allowing to differentiate among categories).

Staff data was included in the EUA Public Funding Observatory in 2016 to broaden the scope of the analysis of the respective higher education landscapes.

### 2.1.4. Macroeconomic data

The following macroeconomic data is collected for data integration and analysis.

- a. Inflation – annual average rate of change, %
- b. Gross Domestic Product at market prices

## 2.2. Data sources

### 2.2.1. National rectors' conferences

EUA's collective members, national rectors' conferences, provide the major source of public funding, student and staff data for the EUA Public Funding Observatory. In line with the established practice, national rectors' conferences were invited in the spring of 2017 to complete the questionnaire to provide data for 2017 and, if necessary, figures submitted for previous years.

*Table 5 National rectors' conferences participating in the Public Funding Observatory 2017 edition*

Universities Austria (UNIKO)	Universities Finland	Latvian Rectors' Council	Slovak Rectors' Conference
Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR)	Conference of University Presidents, France (CPU)	Lithuanian Universities Rectors' Conference	Slovenian Rectors' Conference
Rectors' Conference, French Community of Belgium (CREF)	German Rectors' Conference (HRK)	University of Luxembourg	CRUE Spanish Universities
Croatian Rectors' Conference	Greek Rectors' Conference (2016)	Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU)	Association of Swedish Higher Education
Cyprus Rectors' Conference	Hungarian Rectors' Conference (MRK)	The Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions	swissuniversities
Czech Rectors Conference	Icelandic Rectors' Conference	Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland (KRASP)	Turkish University Rectors' Conference (YOK)
Universities Denmark	Irish Universities Associations (IUA)	Portuguese National Conference of Rectors (CRUP)	Universities UK, in collaboration with Universities Scotland and Universities Wales
Universities Estonia	Conference of Italian University Rectors (CRUI)	Conference of the Universities of Serbia (KONUS)	

## 2.2.2. Eurostat

Actual macroeconomic GDP and inflation data as well as conversion rates for non-Eurozone countries was sourced from Eurostat.

## 2.2.3. Other official sources

Other official sources of qualitative data, including national higher education decrees, ministerial portals and reports were used to complete the analysis of public funding trends in Europe.

## 2.3. Data coverage

### 2.3.1. Spatial coverage

The 2017 Public Funding Observatory features 34 higher education systems, including one newly added country, namely Cyprus, as well as four British higher education systems – England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales – which are included individually in the 2017 Public Funding Observatory report.

*Table 6 Higher education systems included in the Public Funding Observatory 2017 edition*

Austria	France	Luxembourg	Sweden
Belgium – Flanders	Germany	Netherlands	Switzerland
Belgium – French-speaking Community	Greece	Norway	Turkey
Croatia	Hungary	Poland	United Kingdom - England
Cyprus	Iceland	Portugal	United Kingdom – Northern Ireland
Czech Republic	Ireland	Serbia	United Kingdom – Scotland
Denmark	Italy	Slovakia	United Kingdom - Wales
Estonia	Latvia	Slovenia	
Finland	Lithuania	Spain	

### 2.3.2. Temporal coverage

Public funding, student and staff data is collected for the period 2008-2017. However, some data is missing for the following systems and years:

*Table 7 Data availability by period*

Type of data	Country	Missing data	Period covered
Public funding data	Denmark, France, Germany, Italy	Data for 2017	2008-2016
	Estonia	Data for 2016-2017	2008-2015
	Finland	Data for 2008-2010 and for 2016-2017	2010-2015
	Luxembourg	Data for 2008 and 2017	2009-2016
	Switzerland	Data for 2015-2017	2008-2014
	UK-Northern Ireland	Data for 2008-2009 and 2015-2017	2010-2014
	UK-Scotland	Data for 2008-2009	2010-2017
	UK-Wales	Data for 2008	2009-2017
Student data	Austria, Belgium (fl), Belgium (fr), Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland	Data for the academic year 2017/18	2008/09–2016/17

Type of data	Country	Missing data	Period covered
	Estonia, Italy, UK	Data for 2016/17 and 2017/18	2008/09-2015/16
	Belgium (fr)	Data for 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18	2008/09-2014/15
	Spain	Data for 2009, 2010, 2011	2008/09-2016/17
	Cyprus	Not available	Not available
Staff data	Austria, Belgium (fl), Denmark, Finland, France, Norway, Poland, Sweden	Data for 2017	2008-2016
	Czech Republic, Germany, Latvia, Netherlands, Slovenia, Switzerland, UK	Data for 2016-2017	2008-2015
	Belgium (fr)	Data for 2015-2017	2008-2014
	Serbia	Data for 2008-2015	2015-2017
	Cyprus and Lithuania	Not available	Not available

### 2.3.3. Macroeconomic data

GDP and inflation data are not yet available for 2017. Therefore, calculations of public funding in real terms as well as the comparison of public funding and GDP changes can only be made for the period 2008-2016.

GDP datasets for Belgium-Flanders and Belgium-French-speaking Community were not available as such from Eurostat, as Eurostat considers Wallonia and not the French-speaking Community, and therefore does not allow to adequately take account of Brussels Capital's GDP. Therefore, neither systems are included in the analyses involving GDP.

## 2.4. Data adjustment

Several systems adjusted partly or fully their entire datasets. Most of the changes are minor corrections due to the respective update of the national statistical indicators based on real figures. The public funding dataset was fully updated for the following countries: Belgium (fr), the Netherlands and Switzerland. The entire student and staff data series was also partly adjusted for the Netherlands.

*Table 8 Data update per country and period*

Type of data	Country	Corrected period
Funding data	Belgium-fl, Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia	2016
	<i>Belgium-fr, Netherlands, Switzerland</i>	<i>Entire series</i>
	Estonia	2011-2015
	Poland	2015-2016
	Spain	2008-2010 and 2015-2016
Student data	Belgium-fr, Finland	2013/14
	Ireland, Italy, Portugal	2015/16
	France	2016/17
	<i>Netherlands</i>	<i>Entire series</i>

Type of data	Country	Corrected period
	Spain	<i>Entire series</i>
	Sweden	2009/10-2016/17
Staff data	Finland	2010-2016
	Italy	2015
	<i>Netherlands</i>	<i>Entire series</i>

### 3. Calculations

#### 3.1. Conversion and adjustment to inflation

Public funding for universities outside the euro zone is calculated in euros by applying the yearly average conversion rate sourced from Eurostat. Public funding in real terms is calculated by applying the annual inflation rate to the annual volume of public funding expressed in euros.

The calculations are made to compare the long-term changes in public funding in 2016 as opposed to the situation in 2008 (in nominal and real terms) and to evaluate the change between 2016 and 2017 (in nominal terms). For those systems which could not provide funding data for any of the reference years, the data for the nearest year available is taken for the basis of calculation.

#### 3.2. Public funding and student numbers

The long-term changes in student numbers are calculated for the period between the academic years 2008/09 and 2016/17. For those systems which could not provide funding data for any of the reference years, the data for the nearest year available is taken for the basis of calculation.

No direct relation between student numbers and public funding can be established considering the varying scope of data for different systems. The changes in public funding and student numbers are juxtaposed in several graphs to provide contextual information for the evolution of public funding.

#### 3.3. Public funding and GDP

The GDP share of public funding for universities is calculated as a ratio of public funding (in nominal terms) for a given year and the volume of GDP for the same year (e.g. public funding for universities in 2012 / GDP in 2012).

The comparison between GDP and public funding dynamics is made based on the calculation of the change in GDP at market prices in 2016 as compared to 2008, on the one hand, and the change in public funding for the same period, on the other.

#### 3.4. Public funding and staff numbers

The long-term changes in staff numbers (academic and non-academic personnel) are calculated for the period between the academic years 2008/09 and 2016/17. For those systems which could not provide funding data for any of the reference years, the data for the nearest year available is taken for the basis of calculation.

No direct relation between staff numbers and student numbers as well as public funding can be established considering the varying scope of data for different systems. The related changes are juxtaposed to provide contextual information for the evolution of public funding.

#### 4. Country sheet data

The data for each system is detailed in so-called “country sheets”, which provide data both in the form of a summary (see below) and as a table (complete dataset).

## Public Funding Observatory 2017 HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

### Public funding to public universities

Brief description of the development in public funding to public universities in the system. Specific characteristics are mentioned here, including particular elements with regard to the data set (timeframe).



#### % value

Change between first and final year, in nominal terms



#### System type

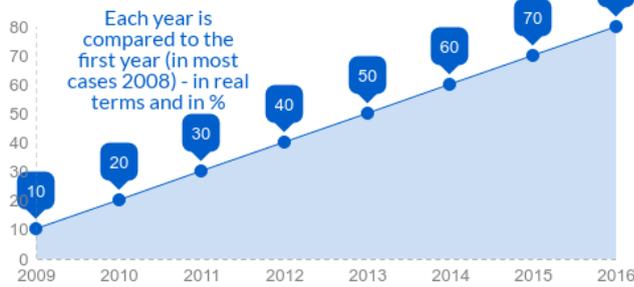
Four categories are available. The type is determined by considering the real change in funding with the student growth over the same period.



#### % value

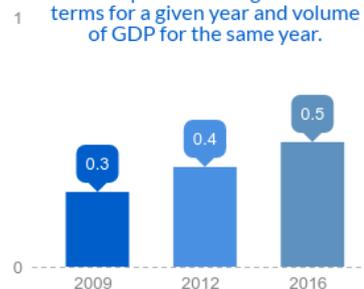
Change between first and final year, taking account of inflation over the period ('real terms')

#### Funding volumes



#### Share of GDP

Ratio of public funding in nominal terms for a given year and volume of GDP for the same year.



### University demographics



#### % value: academic staff

The reference period for both types of staff is specified here. In some cases the data covers only academic staff or total staff and the information is adapted accordingly.



#### % value: non-academic staff



#### % value: students

The reference period is specified here. This value is used to determine the 'type of system' as shown in the top section.

